

14th Annual Kansas Kids Fitness & Safety Day Held May 7

Almost 700 third grade students were on hand Friday, May 7, running, jumping, and otherwise moving across the grounds of Cedar Crest in Topeka. The 2004 Kansas Kids Fitness and Safety Day, sponsored by the Kansas Council on Fitness, Kansas SAFE KIDS, and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, included events to promote physical activity and prevent injury. Activities marked the celebration of SAFE KIDS Week 2004 (May 1-8).

Events took place not only at Cedar Crest, but also at historic Ft. Larned, and at 39 other sites across Kansas. Almost 17,000 third graders, their teachers, and parents participated. Activities at Cedar Crest opened with remarks from Governor Kathleen Sebelius. Coastie, a robot cartoon character in the form of a Coast Guard tugboat, presented a water safety message to participating children and led them in stretching to prepare for the active day.



Governor Sebelius welcomes almost 700 Kansas Kids Day participants to Cedar Crest for a day of fun and activity.

Kansas Kids Fitness Day is an opportunity to impress upon youth the importance of being active and making healthy food choices. A new study released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in March 2004, indicated that poor diet and physical inactivity may soon overtake tobacco as the leading cause of preventable death for all ages.

"Kansas SAFE KIDS is pleased to be able to participate in this statewide event which reinforces to children the fun and health benefits of noncompetitive physical activities and injury prevention. Our theme for SAFE KIDS Week, 'Splash Into Safety!' provides children the opportunity to learn



Coastie and Crew helped teach Water Safety during Kansas Kids Days in Topeka.

more about drowning prevention and how to keep safe in and around water,” said Jan Stegelman, Coordinator of Kansas SAFE KIDS.

The vast majority of American parents of children ages 14 and under appear knowledgeable regarding water safety issues. However, one in five swimmers ages 8-12 has been swimming without a lifeguard or adult supervision at least a “few times.” Educating families and children about water safety is vital to preventing drowning and near drowning incidents. Unfortunately, decreases in unintentional drowning death rates among Kansas' children 0-14 in the last ten years lag behind decreases nationally (nine percent decrease in Kansas compared to 29 percent decrease nationally). Through public awareness activities like Kansas Kids Fitness and Safety Day, Kansas SAFE KIDS seeks to educate children and parents about water safety issues.

In addition to general physical activities, participants at Cedar Crest and other local sites tested their safety skills in interactive relays which included *Stop, Drop & Roll*, *Dial 9-1-1* and *BEEP BEEP* (smoke detector test) as well as *Swim Safe* (life jackets). Children also received a hand stamp containing liquid smoke and crawled through a six-foot tall smoke detector provided by Boeing of Wichita.

All children, statewide, participating in Kansas Kids Fitness and Safety Day received health and safety enrichment packets and jump ropes to encourage physical activity.

A report to the President from the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Education in Fall 2000 noted that physical inactivity has contributed to an unprecedented epidemic of childhood obesity that is currently plaguing the United States. The percentage of young people who are overweight has doubled since 1980. Ten to fifteen percent of children between the ages of 6-17 are considered overweight. Of children ages 5 -15 who are overweight, 61 percent have one or more cardiovascular disease risk factors, and 27 percent have two or more. Unfortunately, Kansas children have not escaped this epidemic.

Kansas SAFE KIDS, Inc., is a nonprofit coalition of over 60 statewide organizations and businesses dedicated to preventing unintentional injuries to Kansas' children ages 0-14. Local Coalitions and chapters are located in Anderson, Clay, Dickinson, Doniphan, Douglas, Ford, Franklin, Johnson, Marion, Montgomery, Nemaha, Osage, Pottawatomie, Republic, Rice, Saline, Shawnee, Wabaunsee and Woodson Counties, as well as Chanute, Junction City, Leavenworth, Manhattan, Norton, Pittsburg, and Greater Wichita. Kansas SAFE KIDS is affiliated with the National SAFE KIDS Campaign.